

NSC BRIEFING

8 December 1955

BRITISH STAND ON GERMAN BARGE LICENSING

I. On question of East German authority to deal with barge license

issue, UK has taken position that the East Germans could handle

the barge licensing of barges of West Germany transiting East German territory to Berlin but that these "administrative arrangements" could not be regarded as affecting "in any way" the obligations assumed by the Soviet Union, the United States, France and Britain under the ~~pe41~~ Paris agreement of June 1949.

A. This agreement insures the normal functioning of water transport in Germany.

B. This action turns over to the East and West Germans the joint supervision of canal traffic across the East-West German boundary provided for originally in a British-Soviet agreement in 1946.

II. British stand has brought sharp reaction in some West German papers, which have charged that it was a mistake, and the first step in recognition of the GDR.

A. One paper, a tabloid, remarked that "British have extended a finger

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to the East German regime, as if not knowing that the whole hand would be taken.

X. (NB: To J/P - No comment from more responsible German press yet).

B. Bonn government yesterday, however, announced that it had been consulted by the British before the UK position was made public.

1. Bonn's statement was reserved and carried no immediate reflection of either disapproval or agreement.